

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 08397 150948Z  
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00  
USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05 PA-02  
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 AID-05 /058 W  
----- 007634 /15

O 150848Z DEC 76  
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4117  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 8397

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINT, IS  
SUBJECT: RABIN GOVERNMENT SURVIVES NO-CONFIDENCE VOTE

REF: TEL AVIV 8359

1. CONTRARY TO THE EARLIER ASSUMPTION THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD EASILY DEFEAT THE MOTION OF NO-CONFIDENCE TABLED BY THE AGUDA BLOC ON THE DESECRATION OF THE SABBATH IN CONNECTION WITH THE ARRIVAL CEREMONY OF THE F-15'S (REFTEL), IT WON THE VOTE TUESDAY EVENING BY THE RELATIVELY NARROW MARGIN OF 55 TO 48. EXTRAORDINARY EFFORTS WERE MADE TO GET ALL AVAILABLE ALIGNMENT MK'S PRESENT IN THE KNESSET, INCLUDING PREVAILING UPON ONE MEMBER TO ATTEND WHOSE FATHER HAD JUST DIED AND HELICOPTERING MINISTERS OFER AND PERES TO JERUSALEM FROM THE AIRPORT UPON THEIR RETURN FROM TRIPS ABROAD.

2. THE CLOSENESS OF THE VOTE RESULTED FROM A DECISION BY THE NRP TO ABSTAIN. NRP INTERIOR MINISTER BURG, HOWEVER, DID VOTE FOR THE GOVERNMENT WHILE THE OTHER NINE NRP MK'S ABSTAINED. THE 55 VOTES FOR THE GOVERNMENT CAME FROM ALIGNMENT MK'S, THE INDEPENDENT LIBERAL PARTY (ILP), BURG AND ONE INDEPENDENT. ALL THE LIKUD MK'S AND MEMBERS OF THE SMALLER FACTIONS VOTED IN OPPOSITION.

3. PRIME MINISTER RABIN MADE SEVERAL EFFECTIVE POINTS IN  
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EXPLAINING THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION. HE POINTED OUT, FOR

EXAMPLE, THAT THE DELIVERY OF THE FIRST F-4'S IN 1969 ALSO OCCURRED ON THE EVE OF THE SABBATH, HAD HAD GREATER CABINET ATTENDANCE AT THE ARRIVAL CEREMONY, AND HAD NOT CAUSED ANY MOTION OF NO-CONFIDENCE; HE NOTED THAT THE LIKUD WAS IN THE GOVERNMENT AT THAT TIME.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH RABIN WAS UNDER ATTACK, HE HANDLED HIMSELF WELL AND THE INCIDENT MAY REDOUND IN HIS FAVOR, ALTHOUGH IT CLEARLY SHOWED THE BRITTLE-LIKE QUALITY OF THE GOVERNMENT'S MAJORITY. ONE PAPER APTLY TERMED IT THE FIRST SKIRMISH OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN "SILLY SEASON."

5. IT IS LIKELY THAT THE NRP WILL BE CRITICIZED FOR NOT SUPPORTING THE GOVERNMENT IN WHICH IT IS A PARTNER. IRONICALLY, THE ILP--WHICH CURRENTLY IS CONSIDERING LEAVING THE COALITION--SUPPORTED THE GOVERNMENT SOLIDLY, WHILE THE NRP WAS NOT LOYAL TO THE COALITION CONTRACT REQUIRING THE THREE GOVERNMENT PARTIES TO OPPOSE ANY NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION. THIS APPEARS TO BEAR OUT THE EMBASSY'S JUDGMENT (TEL AVIV 8339) THAT THE NRP IS MORE INTERESTED IN OPPOSING ANY TREND TOWARD SECULARIZATION THAN IN OTHER POLITICAL ISSUES.

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